

Wycombe make it nine in a row

Horseman the thorn in Bromley's side

BROMLEY 0, WYCOMBE WANDERERS 4

YOU DIDN'T need a crystal ball to predict the outcome of Saturday's Isthmian League match at Hayes Lane. The only speculation was as to how soon Wycombe would score, and how many.

This is not intended to be unkind criticism of Bromley. But the simple fact is that Wycombe arrived with eight successive league victories behind them, and there was no logical reason to suppose that Bromley could end this impressive run.

Stranger things do happen, of course, but freak results are the exception rather than the rule.

So if we accept the fact that Wycombe's victory was inevitable, we must judge Bromley's performance by the manner in which they lost.

Let's start by giving them credit for keeping a clean slate in the first half, despite having to withstand some pretty severe pressure, and despite having to reshuffle their defence, from which the injured John Miles was missing.

EFFECTIVE

Ray Scott moved into the king-pin position and was generally pretty effective, although he was unable to prevent Searle, the Wycombe centre forward, from hitting the bar with a shot on the turn as early as the fifth minute.

Wycombe continued to have the better of the exchanges from this point on. Bromley made frequent counter-attacks, but most of these were nipped in the bud by former Sutton star Ted Powell, or fended off against the determined tackling of Rundle and Delaney.

But though they had so much of the play, Wycombe were unable to find the space they wanted in and around the penalty area, several of their most promising moves being foiled by sheer weight of numbers.

They seemed to miss the scheming talents of another of their former Sutton stalwarts, Larry Pritchard, who was on duty for the Rest of the League against champions Enfield, although why such a meaningless match had to be played on a Saturday, with almost a full league programme scheduled, I cannot imagine.

Torrential rain ten minutes before half time — accompanied by the odd flash of lightning and the rumble of thunder — failed to dampen Wycombe's persistence or Bromley's determination.

And just before the interval Bromley's never-say-die spirit nearly earned them a shock lead as David Wise rose high in the Wycombe penalty box to head fractionally wide from a Danny Lakey corner.

So far, so good. Bromley had reached the half-way mark still on

level terms. But the equality lasted only five more minutes before Horseman eventually put Wycombe in front when he ran on to a loose ball and hit it first-time into the net, appearing to take Alan Soper by surprise.

NOT SATISFIED

Now the only unanswered question was "how many?" Wycombe were clearly not satisfied with one, and Hutchinson would have made it two almost immediately, but for a magnificent save by Soper.

Hutchinson was not to be denied, however, and in the 56th minute he put Wycombe further ahead with a well timed and neatly executed header from a Horseman free kick.

Horseman was a constant thorn in Bromley's side with his scheming and shooting, and Bromley were not helped by having to reorganise their already depleted defence when Micky Miles had to go off with a leg injury in the 37th minute, causing Micky Lloyd to drop back from midfield to the back row.

To their credit, Bromley never gave up trying to cut back the leeway, but they were rarely able to cause Maskell much anxiety in the Wycombe goal.

He was in complete command in his own six-yard box — and beyond — and demonstrated this authority when he came out to a Lakey cross and fisted the ball away from the head of Tony Coppin.

The Bromley centre forward was as industrious as ever, but against this competent Wycombe defence he was desperately short of support in the penalty area when it really mattered.

Once, Jim Brown did the spade-work to create a promising opening, but suddenly Coppin found himself surrounded by a blue-shirt blockade, and looked a very lonely figure.

Twelve minutes from time that man Horseman was in the action again, and it was he who was brought down by Scott to pave the way for Delaney to put Wycombe three up from the penalty spot.

And three minutes later Horseman, from a lying-down position

near the bye line, managed to scramble the ball to Anthony, who neatly drilled in No. 4.

Maybe the four-goal margin flattened Wycombe slightly, but it was not difficult to understand why they are the Isthmian League pace-setters.

Wycombe. — Soper, Miles (M.), McAllister, Leonard, Scott, Wise, Brown (J.), Lloyd, Coppin, Lakey, Day. Sub.: Campbell (for Miles).

Wycombe. — Maskell, Rundle, Blunt, Powell, Delaney, Baker, Anthony, Horseman, Searle, Bremer, Hutchinson. Sub.: Faulkner (for Rundle).

JOHN HULLS.